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being stodgy, even predictable and boring. Even more so, the auditor: that truly numbers-focused researcher of data whose sole purpose is to determine the propriety of an organization's financial reporting and their internal controls over financial reporting. Perhaps only actuaries are more maligned in their public perception.

**Isaac M. O'Bannon** • Sep. 01, 2011

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Accountants and accounting firms have long suffered from the false stereotype of

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practices with rigid corporate cultures, it certainly isn't fitting for Tim Gavin or the firm for which he works, Sikich, LLP ([www.Sikich.com](http://www.Sikich.com)). The 30 year-old CPA and auditor has worked out of the firm's Aurora, Illinois, office since graduating college, and moved into the role of audit supervisor after attaining his credential.

Tim's primary engagements involve audits of local governments, which he notes have seen significant changes in their audit and financial reporting requirements over the past few years. At the same time, local governments have experienced shrinking staffs and payrolls, and this combination has brought challenges in their financial management, processes and internal controls. Sikich has developed a core specialty in providing audits to these entities, and is the largest provider of these services in the Chicago area, with some municipal clients having up to 200,000 residents. In addition to audits and other attestation functions, the firm's government team has a services side that regularly provides local governments with temporary in-office staff and management.

As with most audit engagements, much of the work is done in the field. That's definitely the case with Tim, who estimates he sometimes sees his office as little as one or two days a month, and an aggregate of perhaps two months out of the year. Fortunately, most of his engagements are in the Chicago area, which allows the husband and father of two to have dinner with his family and then, if necessary, continue work from home in the evenings.

"I mostly work from client sites and from home, and only have to go in for occasional reporting and planning," he noted. "But since Sikich is a very technologically progressive firm, we always have full remote connectivity with the engagement management systems we use, as well as our other professional applications."

As an experienced field auditor, Tim also helps identify new technology tools and helped his firm implement the use of additional mobile monitors. Sikich has long

had multiple monitors for workstations, but the challenge of finding an easily

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and wealth management, the practice also has specialties in human resource consulting, technology services, and graphic design and marketing.

This broad collection of client services has enabled Sikich LLP, which has a history stretching more than 80 years, to grow to a staff of approximately 375 members and 57 partners, located in nearly a dozen offices around Chicago, Indianapolis and St. Louis. It is listed as the 50<sup>th</sup> largest accounting firm in the United States. The firm scored a 389 on the CPA Practice Advisor's Productivity Survey, a free web-based tool that helps firms assess their workflow and technology usage, and provides benchmarking against similarly sized practices ([www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/productivity-survey](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/productivity-survey)). This score is impressive for a firm the size of Sikich, since large practices can easily become entrenched in legacy systems and practices.

With these various services, a young CPA who passed all four parts of the exam on his first try might be tempted to diversify his own experience, at least for resume-building purposes ... but not Tim.

"I love audit engagements; they're logical and structured and concrete, but not without their share of curveballs. While there are some changes to FASB, GASB and GAAP, they aren't nearly as volatile as tax law, which I think is dry and aggravating." Since his focus is on local government audits, his primary "busy season" is a little longer and less severe than that of professionals who focus on tax compliance or auditing for-profit entities. He estimates that he works about 55 to 60 hours per week during the summer months, then closer to 45 to 50 per week during the rest of the year.

As for his resume, he doesn't anticipate needing one again, since he says he hopes to stay with Sikich for his entire career. "I've worked with the same partners for years, and feel that they are helping guide me toward a partnership role. I can't think of



anything that would be more fulfilling.” Tim has already started leading some

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In some ways, Tim says that the office might even resemble a dot-com era environment, albeit one run by fiscally responsible CPAs. He said it has an open atmosphere and work-casual dress code that allows jeans and polo shirts when clients aren't visiting, and a tie is rarely in sight even when clients are. The office also offers rooms for playing games, working out or relaxing.

Prior to Sikich, Tim worked at Brookdale Music ([www.BrookdaleMusic.com](http://www.BrookdaleMusic.com)), a retail musical instrument store in his hometown of Naperville, Illinois, while he was in high school and while attending North Central College for his BS in accounting. And actually, he was initially considering a career in sound engineering. He later received an MBA from Northern Illinois University. At Brookdale, which is coincidentally owned by a CPA, Tim managed the inventory and also did some graphic design work and web development.

Tim and his wife Erin, who will be celebrating their ninth anniversary in November, live in Naperville, with their daughters Alayna and Alice. They spend their free time doing “normal family and household stuff.” But when they can get away, they enjoy Eagle Ridge Resort and playing tourists in Galena, an Illinois vacation spot on the Mississippi River famous for its antiques stores, golfing and lakes.

The family is active with their church, Bethany Lutheran ([www.bethanylcs.org](http://www.bethanylcs.org)) in Naperville, where Tim is a part of a capital fundraising campaign. Erin is a volunteer with Literacy DuPage, an adult literacy program. Tim, being a Chicago-area native, is a life-long fan of the Cubs, Bears and Bulls, of course.

## Infobox

**Tim Gavin, CPA, MBA**

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Finance, Technology Services, HR Consulting, International Business Services, Performance Measurement, Marketing & Graphic Design

**Education:** BS, North Central College; MBA, Northern Illinois University

**Social Networking:**

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/TGavinCPA](https://www.twitter.com/TGavinCPA)

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=10370682>

Blog: <http://blog.sikichtechnology.com>

**Last Book Read:** "1984" by George Orwell

**Smartphone of Choice:** Android (EVO 4G)

**Last Conference Attended:** Illinois Government Finance Officers Association annual conference

**Favorite Website:** LinkedIn

**Hobbies:** Playing guitar, drums; writing/recording music; running

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